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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP TO MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY

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The essentials of a school are teachers and students. According to our new education, the primary office of the teacher is to teach, not thoughts or things, but human beings. He is not a superior being whose aim is to impart authoritative information to inferiors, sustaining to him the appropriate attitude of submission, passivity, and docility. Renouncing aristocratic aloofness, he becomes his students' guide and friend, developing their energy, independence, initiative, and resourcefulness. *Learning by doing* is the slogan in our modern schools as against the old watchword of learning by being told or taught.

Accordingly, pupils are put in direct relation with reality instead of with symbols of reality. The content of life and environment is the subject-matter which they study. It is not that the student is immediately fitted for some trade or vocation or profession, but that the material which he examines and elaborates is drawn from actual life itself. The new education aims to give neither mere "book learning," as was the case with an earlier scholasticism, nor the narrow and technical vocational training, as the present-day secularist craves, but to develop mind and body, to stimulate inventiveness, and to cultivate a judicial temper and habit, in order that the student may be prepared to become

a happy and useful member of a democratic society. In a word, our new general education assimilates itself to the spirit of democracy and to the method of our sciences.

Now, in what respect, if in any, does professional or vocational education differ from our ordinary education? By a professional school is meant an institution where students gain control of one specialized field of knowledge, of one particular industry or profession or calling—such, for example, as engineering, or medicine, or divinity. Professional schools—their history reveals this—have usually fallen into the extremes of an inherited scholastic “bookishness” or else of a narrow utilitarian practicism. To illustrate in the use of theology, this “discipline” was knowledge dissociated from life, a thing worth while on its own account; or else it was little more than drill in the usages and ceremonies of the church. In ages of rationalism and panlogism, it tended to be the former; it was the latter in primitive and mediaeval times. It may be doubted whether medicine and law are second to theology as exemplars of these extremes.

In opposition to this scholastic education apart from active life or this technical education apart from broad learning, the new education of the ordinary schools unites ideas and practice, work and the recognition of the meaning of what is done, learning and social applications. Happily, the conviction is maturing today that this unity should replace those theoretical and practical one-sidednesses in our professional education; that, advancing into the region of specialism, the matter of most importance is not familiarity with the body of ready-made knowledge, or skill in manipulating a technique, but knowing how to know, skilful in becoming skilful. At bottom, this means the formation of the kind of character and experience which, in their special modification, are required for the enthusiasm and service of humanity in that special profession. Thus, the primary function of any professional school is the unfolding and maturing of the right kind of man for the right kind of work. Both the school's science and practice are simply means to that end. It is neither the knowledge nor the practice in their abstractness, but the *knowing and doing personality* that is society's valuable asset.

Now it is in the light of such considerations as these that the serious problems of our theological education may be approached.

There is a distinction—not philological, but historical and real—between the words “calling” and “vocation.” The significance of this distinction leads to the heart of our problem, so worthy of thus studying in a large way. Historically speaking, calling is providential, vocation is optional; calling is religious, vocation is moral; calling is a man’s by motives deeper than his choice, wiser than his deliberations; vocation is a man’s by his own elective preference. In calling, a minister feels that he is a man of destiny—woe is me if I preach not the gospel; I was foreordained and set apart from my mother’s womb for this work, a work in which the power of the eternal is at my disposal, is indeed my power. Without this feeling the minister is sure to be shorn of his strength and robbed of his greatness among men. But in vocation one is looked upon as self-dependent, self-sufficient, self-accountable. To be sure, calling and vocation are not exclusive, but the objective and subjective, rather the divine and the human side, of the same experience. But, historically, they have fallen asunder. At the beginning of the modern world, Luther and Calvin both looked upon a man’s work, no matter what it was, as his calling—as his by the providential will of God. Thus, a man’s work reposed upon a *religious* basis. Men were what they were, doing what they did, by the power and plan and purpose of God. Such a conviction brought strength and stay and contentment. But, in the eighteenth century, the religious basis of all secular<sup>1</sup> callings was undermined. The relative historical justification of this critical dissolution does not concern us here. The fact is that, along with science and art and education, the other orders of life dispensed with their religious foundation, and that capital, machinery, and technique came in to take their place. Accordingly, faith in the fulfilment of one’s daily task came to repose in the latter rather than in the former.

In all this one may see progress in a certain direction. Perhaps the heavens had to be emptied and clouded for a time, if men

<sup>1</sup> Aware of the dualism seemingly involved in the words “secular” and “sacred,” I find it convenient to use them in this article.

were to realize that they must stand upon the earth, develop the resources of the earth, and depend upon themselves. Yet this loss of the religious basis of secular callings is largely responsible for the sorry fruits of egoism and mammonism, of cynicism and pessimism. It may not be too much to say that the world of business needs nothing so much as to add to the confidence in technique and machinery and money, the ancient faith in God, with his providential guidance over men's work, and his peace and power in men's hearts. Labor needs to supply to its notion of vocation its former notion of calling. It watches, but it also needs to pray.

Has an analogous development gone on in the sacred calling of the Christian ministry? Once there was the religious basis without machinery and capital—not even a salary! The ministry was calling, conscious of God's power and will, God's truth and cause, God's providence. The minister spoke with authority to the consciences and hearts of men. There was an accent of positive conviction that could not be simulated or mistaken. Men were made to face the tables of stone, the cross, and the great white throne. A supernatural significance and awe attached to human life as a probationary place of definitive and eternal decisions. The prophet and priest of God was a king among men. What has been going on? The sacred calling is duplicating in its own way the experience of the secular calling. The calling becomes a vocation. To be sure, this is but a "moment" in the total secularization of all life, which seems to be the set program of the modern world. The sacred calling is becoming de-supernaturalized and, in a sense, de-spiritualized. So is its technique. But one sees in this great change the method of the evolutionary process fully illustrated. Life, characteristic of one era, survives, increasingly unproductive and moribund, in the subsequent period, committed to new growths and species. At length, such life of the old order ceases in fact as it had already ceased in principle. This is true in the sphere of the higher life and processes of which we are thinking. Thus, in principle—though not yet entirely in fact—the divinity of the historic sacraments is gone, and of ministerial grace from ordaining hands; gone is the origin of the sermon in the

Holy Ghost—the open-your-mouth-and-it-shall-be-filled theory of preaching—the naive and primitive trust in divine afflatus; gone is the preacher's living upon the capricious gratuities and donations of a flock who felt that it was their place to keep him poor, God's to keep him humble—both prerogatives now arrogated to themselves. More serious still, the divinity of his church, of the doctrines and morals of his sermons, of the Head of the church, of the specific God of his theology—these too are gone; and with them the old miraculous supernaturalism of regeneration and sanctification and perfection. Indeed, these words are quite unintelligible to the modern man on the street and almost obsolete in the terminology of the theologian. What is taking the place of all this that once constituted the religious basis of the ministerial calling? In part, technique, machinery, capital, especially organization with the correlate of scientific efficiency of the churches in manipulating them. The dream is of a scientific ministry instead of the old religious ministry. The minister is not so much prophet and priest of God as an administrative officer of a philanthropic and humanitarian institution endowed by capital, which he is competent to execute. The church is not a temple, but a "plant." The idea seems to be gaining favor that if men are fed and clothed and sheltered and washed and amused, they will not need to be redeemed with the old terrible redemption. In somewhat harsh antithesis, to be sure, one may say that not supernatural regeneration, but natural growth; not divine sanctification, but human education; not supernatural grace, but natural morality; not the divine expiation of the cross, but the human heroism—or accident? —of the cross; not the supernatural spiritual brother, but the natural bodily brother; not the invisible religious communion of saints, living and dead, but boys' clubs and men's clubs and social settlements, all run in the use of technique, machinery, and capital, with scientific efficiency clinically learned in a divinity school;<sup>1</sup> and not Christ the Lord, but the man Jesus who was a child of his times, not God and his providence, but evolution and its process without an absolute goal—that all this, and such as this, is the new

<sup>1</sup> In a recent volume of essays, Paul Elmer Moore says: A divinity school is a place where they investigate poverty and spread agnosticism."

turn in the affairs of religion at the tick of the clock. It is the change that is going on from the old minister to the new, from the old church to the new.

Now, is this progress? In a sense, yes. It was progress in the secular. The machine makes shorter hours possible, leaving time for possible personal improvement and social intercourse. A larger population can be provided for; and so forth.

The same is true of the church with modern appointments and appliances, money and organization. We have but to think of how much better religion can be taught in the use of modern pedagogy; or of how much more systematically and wisely scientific charities can be administered; of how organized parish visitations can be carried on; of how the problem of the boy can be solved; of how church services can be conducted with beauty and finesse. All this is good and will doubtless grow better. Besides, the beliefs of the church which constitute the substance of the sermon are readjusted to fit more harmoniously into the sum of modern convictions. We shall not be able to go back behind all this in the world of the church any more than in the world of business.

But, for all that, we have the problem on our hands in the secular world as to whether machine and capital are primary, and personality and humanity secondary, or whether it is the other way around; the problem of whether man is for the sake of vocation, or vocation for the sake of man—the problem of man's spirituality and freedom and worth. But this problem can never be solved until there is the restoration of the long-lost religious basis of secular life. It is not science, it is faith, the communion of all men in and with God, that can make man the lord and not the slave of capital and machine and organization. Only so can there cease to be the hard dominion of thing over person. Once again the laborer must return to the conviction that his vocation is a calling—his calling by the will and providence of God.

A similar relationship needs to be maintained in the world of the sacred between the primary worth of personality and the instrumentalities and institutions of the church. The real church of God is a spiritual and invisible communion of religious faith. The real church of God is super-institutional. As man, any man, is more than a "member of society," is super-social from the point

of view of a social organism, that is, is a *child of God*, so the calling of the minister is more than so-called "social service," and has to do with that deep of man which cries unto the deep of the being of God. There was a lonely hour at the brook Jabbok when Jacob's family and flock were out of his mind, the peril of his angry brother forgotten, his heart corroded by no mordant memory—a lonely hour in which he cried: "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name," the Ineffable Name. He wanted to know the eternal mystery and meaning of existence. Not so-called "social service," but the ministry of the interpretation and the satisfaction of this inexpugnable and abysmal need of man, is the supreme and inalienable function of the Christian minister. And this is a work where the peculiar worth of personality, religious personality, entirely dissociated from all the technique and machinery and capital of the whole ecclesiastical entity, is paramount. It were well to realize in thought what a reduction of human nature and human need there would be, were man to be abridged to a point where what could be done for him by "social service" with its instrumentalities could satisfy him. Man has untranslatable wealth, super-vocational vastness and verities and relationships. So has the minister; and it is this super-vocational overplus that is the best part of the minister, and that lends chief charm and value even to the minister's vocational activity itself.

It is in the light of this larger perspective that one can evaluate the most characteristic watchword of the modern world—*efficiency*. The educational and ecclesiastical circles have borrowed it from the commercial world. It must be admitted that there is much value in the maxim. It is opposed to sloth. In the concentration and solidification which it requires, it discourages the spirit that reflectively divides the inner self and leaves it divided. And it emphasizes courage. To be sure, it is the courage to face rivals in the market place rather than the courage that meets one's own spiritual enemies. But, for all that, we know in our hearts that this modern watchword is profoundly unsatisfactory in every sphere of life, particularly in the Christian ministry. What this watchword does not emphasize is the significance of self-possession; of lifting up our eyes to the hills whence cometh our help; of testing the life that now is by the vision of the largest life that we can

image and appreciate. In a way that appeals to a superficial populace with quantitative standards, it emphasizes results rather than ideals, vigor rather than cultivation, temporary success rather than wholeness of life, the greatness of him that "taketh a city" rather than of him that "ruleth his spirit." It points to a shallow pragmatism, missing the pragmatic depths. In its current signification, it is not correlated to man's deepest needs—needs which, from the point of view of this word, are super-efficient. Men are indeed suffering from poverty and dirt and disease, from manifold industrial and social evils. The minister must indeed sustain positive relations to these evils. But the worst evil is not such sufferings. The worst evil is spiritual destitution. Men are suffering far more from the loss of God and of the moral imperative than from the lack of bread and work, of recreation and amusement. What can silence the voice of the heart's pain? What can introduce a man defeated, lonely, bereaved, defenseless, into the region of eternal truth, eternal rest, eternal peace? "Efficiency" cannot answer such questions. These are questions common to all time. But our time is indeed an age of doubt, more widespread and more basic than the premature prognosticators of an age of faith seem to be aware of. The new world began in doubt. First, there was a doubt of the church and of its divine authority. A violent devastating storm swept over popular life. The storm was speedily exorcised. Again—

The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

Then from the old doubt a new faith emerged, like sweet waters in a bitter sea, and kept man a living soul.

The sea is calm tonight;  
The tide is full.

The tide of the new faith was the faith in the Bible, and in the doctrines derived from the Bible, but this tide went back to sea, and now one only hears:

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

The human spirit urged a new, mightier protest against the "It is written," which was said to put an end to all doubt. The new doubt, as protestant science, as free inquiry, flung down the gauntlet to the old Bible faith. No page of the Sacred Book remained unscrutinized. Only one certainty spread from this new doubt—the certainty that the Sacred Book was a human book. Therefore allowing and ever rejoicing in the moral and religious value of many a page, the biblical canon as such had no right to rule over man. Man was the book's judge; the book was not man's judge. The book must be measured by man's truth, man's conscience.

How, now, should the timorous heart of man be quieted in the presence of this new doubt? At once new props were offered—for one thing, the state. What the church was to the mediaeval man the state became to the modern man—God manifest in the flesh. Men believed in their state as in their Christ. All power in heaven and on earth seemed to be given to it. What was preached in the name of the state was a gospel. It seemed a sin to doubt the wisdom of the state at all. It was blasphemy to contest the state's claim to omnipotence. Good? What is good if not that which benefits the state? True? But where is there truth apart from the word that is the *ipse dixit* of the state? The political end sanctifies any means.

Then a great change began. Historic study and the doctrine of development, together with the new ideals of personality and humanity, decomposed the old theory of the state. Modern man came to see that the state does not possess eternal life. The state is only a special form in which human social life can exist, not human society itself. There have not always been states. They came to be in the long course of the evolution of a people's life. What comes to be must pay its toll to Father Time. The state will change—and pass. Thus its inerrancy and finality were discredited. If we doubt the church, why not the state, too? Man's tottering life could not be braced up by either.

Then new props were offered man. What science recognized as "true," what morals and *bourgeois* customs recognized as "good"—these were offered him. "Trust the light of science, and you shall indeed have the light of life; do what is 'good' and you shall

indeed be crowned with the crown of life." This was the watchword. Then there stirred in the womb of present-day humanity the last, ultimate, uncanniest doubt. If we doubt faith, why not doubt science too? If we doubt the church, the Bible, the state, why not doubt reason, doubt knowledge, doubt morality? Even if what we call "true" be really true, can it make us good and happy? Is not that which is called "good" grievous impediment in our pilgrimage? Law, morals—are not these perhaps a blunder of history, an old hereditary woe with which humanity is weighted down? Was Stendhal right perhaps in his judgment that "the only excuse for God is that he does not exist"?

Here—here is the agony of the modern world. But what can our current "efficiency" do here—"efficiency" with its technique and machinery and money and organization? At this point the tragedy of life passes beyond the help of such things, and of institutional religion. Is there no help for lost souls any more? The minister who cannot cope with this deepest need of the modern man may organize superficial and often impertinent reforms, but he cannot give the bread of life. He may minister to bodily wants—good enough in its way—but he leaves the soul in its bewilderment and forsakenness. In the end he loses confidence and abandons his fundamental task. Our fathers thought of the Christian minister as prophet, priest, and king. This watchword "efficiency" tends to restrict the ministerial function to that of king. But the need of the times, as of all times, is satisfied more fully by prophet and priest. In sum: the great question is not that of efficiency, but of the *criterion* of efficiency. It would be the minister's sin against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness, were he to truncate and abridge the nature and need of man so that our institutionalized religion of scientific efficiency could sustain an easy correlation thereto.

Thus conceiving the function of the ministry in the terrible religious situation of the modern world, the utility of the study of theology in our divinity schools may be estimated.

Theology is the science of faith, of religion. Of this statement much more needs to be said than can be said here. While science and religion are both expressions and aids of human life, they are

different in form and function. Briefly expressed, religion experiences, science calculates; religion creates, science discovers; religion ventures, science weighs. Science avails itself of concepts and categories and laws; religion, of symbols and pictures and parables.

Assuming that theology is a science, a practical difficulty at once confronts us. Can theology be at once scientific and ecclesiastical? From the ecclesiastical point of view, the aim of theology has been to clarify and increase the Christian's intelligence as regards the content of his faith; to evince the living power of the Christian religion, and to bring this home to bear upon life through preaching, teaching, and Christian communion. From the scientific point of view, theology seeks to be free from the control and needs of the church, to be determined solely by the truth-interest, by the impulse to know reality, and to regard no law but its own, and no authority save the compulsion of its subject-matter. Since the second Christian century, those two interests, the ecclesiastical and the scientific, have never vanished. But it may be doubted whether they have ever been in equilibrium. Usually the one has been emphasized at the expense of the other. Indeed, theology is usually under a cross-fire from both science and faith—disowned by science, distrusted by faith. One may recall its mediaeval dignity as queen of the sciences, as science was then understood; but since the rise of the modern scientific method, theology came to be but compassionately tolerated by the representatives of the exact sciences, doubted by many of its own representatives, and incriminated by the laity as the primary cause of all the evils with which the church of the present was infested. It was thought that in satisfying the requirements of science theology betrayed the interests of religion. Hence the question became acute: Can theology be at once scientific from the point of view of science and serviceable from the point of view of practicable Christianity? Is the study of theology a sufficient or even a suitable preparation for the office of preacher and pastor? Does theology destroy the preacher's message, lower the preacher's piety, impair the preacher's usefulness?

Facing the problem thus fundamentally, one may be permitted to dismiss certain superficial or captious objections. For example,

it is pointed out that the scientific study of theology in a divinity school has occasionally impelled students to abandon the ministry. Such abandonment may be due to the popular theology and nominal Christianity in which he was indoctrinated before he went to the divinity school; or the student, as was the case with Emerson and Kant and Hegel, may enter upon a larger human service than that which a local church could afford. Besides, the occasional abandonment of the ministry under the influence of scientific theology does not discredit such theology, if it is seen to be in general useful, any more than would be the case in the analogous situation of law or medicine. But if it be true—as sometimes true it is—that now and then a theological student makes shipwreck of faith, even this disaster does not constitute a decisive objection, since this is a world where such shipwreck is possible from many causes, one of them being the absence of sound theological training.

Other objectors ask: Why is it that so many students who have studied scientific theology cannot preach? It might not be amiss to inquire whether they could preach if they had not studied scientific theology. As a rule, the academic and technical character of the young minister wears away as the years bring him experience and maturity, suffering and sorrow of his own, sickness and death of others. His fault is more likely to be a neglect of theological study than a bad use of it.

But we may pass by such objections, and return to the main issue.

Let us assume that theology is in method a “pure” science, in purpose an “applied” science—avoiding the extremes of academic bookishness and of the narrow practicalism of “efficiency.” Let us grant—as the truth-interest requires us to grant—that the purity must not be adulterated by the application. Pure science is free science and—in Hegelian phrase, not to be pragmatically flouted—has the theoretical self-end of knowledge. Now, by virtue of this very character of theological science, is there some service which it may render the ministry? A science which serves the self-cognition of spirit serves thereby one of the supreme, practical ends of life, which is self-realization of spirit. Only an officially infallible church can do without the aid of such science.

Ministers, like politicians, are especially tempted to debasement of the truth-interest—to sham learning, sham religion. The great sin of ministers can easily be the infraction of the ethics of the intellect. Theological science is developing a fine sincerity in our relation to both theology and religion. Such honesty and sobriety of judgment are among a minister's best assets in our age of doubt. They go toward the formation of personality which is at once the primary need of man and the main concern of all education.

Should theology be restricted to the so-called applied, or, better perhaps, vocational sciences, as some divinity schools seek to do, a problem of no little gravity would arise. Would the new vocationally determined science be any more free and pure than the old authoritatively determined science? Is not a postdetermined science by an end externally imposed as prejudicial to the critical occupation of the scientific spirit as a predetermined science by a cause or authority which proscribes freedom and dictates conclusions? Is the *pull* of an alien finalism any better than the *push* of an alien mechanism? If authority-science gives doctrine and not truth, does not vocation-science give practice and not truth? There is something here that should be borne in mind, lest we impair the truth-interest, so inalienable to our highest life as students and ministers. Extremes meet, and it would be an ugly situation were "authority" and "vocation" to combine upon us in such a way that our natural impulse to know should be wounded and weakened. This evil may be avoided by honoring the study of scientific theology as corrective and supplementation of vocational science, ever inclined to deteriorate to an immediate and narrow professionalism.

But theology in all its branches—historical, psychological, philosophical—as "pure" science does serve the vocational ends of the ministry, even if it does not directly and consciously aim to do so.

For one thing, it is indispensable to a reasoned understanding of what religion really is. In defining anything, one speedily turns to see how it came to be and what it is for. Thus, one knows a religious idea, or a religious deed, only as one sees how it has historically and psychologically emerged, and what function it fulfills

in a people's or an individual's life. Besides, one requires to know the relation between idea and action in religion, the order of the emergence of magic, cult, myth, idea, doctrine, and their relations to each other. Especially does one need to know how to face the problem as to what is primary and what secondary and impermanent in religion. It appears that religion is not exhausted as a short-circuit to the real by way of instinct and feeling. The science of religion shows that there is a deep truth in this. Most of the best things in life are rooted in instinct—which is perhaps just another way of saying that we are still ignorant of their precise conditions and causes. But religion, if it is worth while, is not merely a matter of instinct and emotion. It is a legitimate part of man's rational nature. The substance of religion is not in the ceremonies and creeds and institutions which have been built up in connection with church, but in man's consciousness that the best part of him lies in his ideals and in his earnest and sincere efforts to realize these ideals. It is the recognition that the spiritual center of gravity of his life lies, not in what he is or has been, but in what he feels that he ought to become. The only study that leads us into this most needful insight for our work as preachers is that of scientific theology.

But, for another thing, such study yields impressive testimony to the human cry for God. That cry—whether joyous and triumphant, or painful, pathetic, poignant—reverberates from land to land, and from century to century. The very import of human history is its mysterious and universal urgency and awfulness. Whether it be the vague cosmological gropings of a primitive animism with its crass anthropomorphizing of duty and personification of inanimate objects; whether it be the passionate searching out of concepts or essences by Socrates, Plato, and the Scholastics, with their confident assurance of the existence of an archetypal reality; whether it be the blended love and fear with which the intense and mystical Semites worshiped Jahwe and dared finally in the Greatest of the Hebrews to claim Divinity itself; whether it be the masterful executive ability with which the mediaeval ecclesiastics sought to embody a spiritual world in a temporal, even in a political hierarchy; whether it be the refreshing direct-

ness with which the Protestants sought to re-establish an immediate relation of the believer with his God; whether it be the pathetic attempts of modern apologists to reconcile Genesis and Darwinism, or the wistful admission of the man of science that he has scanned the heavens with his telescope and found not God—whether it be one or all of these earnest and honest endeavors of man to understand his world and his own experience, the study of theology makes us recognize throughout, always and everywhere, the search for the unity and continuity of the life and love of man with an eternal and fatherly God. The value of this world-old and worldwide witness to the minister of religion is obvious. It is quite the fashion in some modern circles to pride one's self on one's unbelief—though *why* what one does *not* believe should be so admirable is not so immediately evident. It is much more to the point, one would think, to pride one's self on the number of truths one had found at the core of current superstitions. But it is only through the study of theology in all its branches that one acquires the judgment and skill to make such discoveries.

With these general considerations in mind, we may very well close by isolating for special remark those specific questions which were raised a moment ago.

The first of those questions is the effect of the study of theology upon the definite message of the preacher.

Biblical infallibility now abandoned, the idea that the source and certainty of the preacher's message are rooted in God's dictation and donation of truth is no longer tenable. The props that upheld him in the old orthodox days are virtually all gone. The easy gift of authoritative truth has been denied him once for all. The study of a deposit of truth must give way to the search for reality.

The case is quite the same in this regard if one turns from orthodoxy to rationalism, which undertook to replace the finished and final truth of revealed and authoritative biblical religion. According to rationalism, the human mind possesses *a priori* a sum of theoretical and practical ideas, untarnished by the corruptions and contingencies of experiential origin, from which absolute truth may be easily deduced. A religion of reason, consisting essentially

of the ideas of God, of freedom or the moral law, and of immortality, supplemented the religion of revelation at first, but subsequently became a forum before which the truth and error of all positive, historical religions were adjudicated. The task of the old rationalistic clergyman who expounded the parsimonious content of truth inborn in his own reason, and skilfully demonstrated its agreement with Christianity, was simpler and shorter than the task of the orthodox clergyman burdened with the study of biblical languages, with exegesis and harmonizings with creeds and confessions. But the intellectual and critical movements of the modern world have remorselessly demolished this naïve rationalism. As to those innate ideas, John Locke searched the infant mind and reported that he could not find any of them. He found that ideas are of temporal and empirical origin. Thus their fixed and eternal truths were undermined. Kant followed with his proof that the content of the religion of reason could not be objects of rational knowledge, but only of faith. The outcome was that the authority of reason went the way of the authority of the Bible. All finished and fixed authorities fell, even that of conscience, since it too was unfinished and temporally and spatially conditioned. Of all this, earlier mention will be recalled.

In all these ways the task of the minister grew more difficult, more grievous. In the absence of easy donations of truth from an inerrant book, he must seek and try and doubt and test, with an open and candid truth-loving spirit. The study of theology becomes more important than ever. This importance consists not simply in the ascertainment of the truth, but especially in the formation of a religious personality. Through historical and philosophical study of the dissolution of orthodoxy and of rationalism the student recapitulates and epitomizes the terrible experience of doubt, learns that religion is ever changing, ever in the making, and thus becomes personally prepared to meet the needs and difficulties of our age of doubt and transition and growth. It is not simply truth, but the truthful *man*, tried in the fires of critical theological research, that can win the confidence of our bewildered and discouraged religious life. Men who ask whether Christianity is final or transient, even whether religion

is an illusion or a verity, cannot abide an answer from those ministers who have themselves never asked in anguish, and who cannot answer with sincerity out of the earnestness and courage of their own hearts.

Reverting to the question of the influence of theological study upon the personal piety of the student, the possibilities are, namely, the dependence of piety upon theology—in which case theology could conceivably destroy or sustain piety; or the dependence of theology upon piety, faith, religion, with the reverse alternative to the former; or, finally, the complete or partial independence of the two. Representatives of each of these possibilities have been numerous in the history of the church. In the end, theology annihilates faith—so the second-century church maintained against Clement, the Alexandrian theologian, and so Overbeck, for example, argues in recent years. Moreover, many a theological student feels as if the critical work in the classroom of a scientific theologian was a deadly assault upon his faith.

Were this indeed true, there would be no help for it, since science cannot submit to quarantine from any region of reality that is accessible to examination, and since a faith that fears scrutiny is already enfeebled through self-distrust. For all the future, it would seem, the piety that resists research is foredoomed to atrophy. Indeed, part of the purpose of the study of theology is to subject our piety to the laws of survival. But while some divinity students make shipwreck of faith—a possible price to be paid to the right of science—the usual outcome is a destruction, not of faith, but of the inherited *form* of faith. As a rule, the student closes his years of special study with his faith purged and strengthened, and adapted as never before to nourish and hearten him for the battle of life and the fulness of service. Ceasing to be a quantum of past beliefs, his faith becomes an interior attitude of his spirit, which science cannot take away.

The opposite position—advocated strenuously in recent years by Bollinger—is quite out of harmony with the philosophic temper and thought of our new day. Its thesis is that theory precedes practice, that knowledge is the foundation of practical piety, that knowledge of God is the *prius* of faith in God, finally, that

this knowledge is not traditional (in which case there would be no way to decide whether it was true or false), but demonstrative. It is clear that such a contention is a reversion to an obsolete rationalism with its theistic arguments, and the like.

Admitting, as a truth at which it hints, that there is an intellectual "moment" in the religious consciousness, still one of the great merits of scientific theology is its recognition that the way to God is not proof, but prayer; that we know God because we have faith in him, rather than have faith in him because we know him. Modern theology has probably done no more important service than to clarify this problem.

There remains the possibility for which no less men than Kant and Schleiermacher stood, as have many Ritschlians, namely, the reciprocal neutrality of theology and piety.

Extreme as this position is, there is an important distinction between religion and theology, a distinction in form and function. Suffice it to say here that one of the purposes of the study of theology is to acquire a thorough understanding of this whole matter. Otherwise, it would hardly be possible for the student to escape confusion and aberration. Failure to make such an escape would later yield the injurious result of misleading his church into a piety without knowledge or a knowledge without piety, or an identification of the two—an evil to which the pages of church history bear impressive witness. The distinction, for instance, between the living real God and a concept God is vital to peace of mind and to the power of the gospel today.

With reference to this whole question, it may be said that usually the candidate for the ministry—young though he may sometimes be—enters the divinity school as a finished religious and theological product, but that in consequence of his studies there he departs, unfinished, growing, aware that his personality, with its religion and its theology, are alike in the making. A divinity school that achieves such a result has fulfilled its function in the life of the human spirit.